

- Also Helps House Pass Legislation to Repair Dangerous Dams -

- 16 Dutchess and 22 Orange Dams are "High Hazard" -

Washington, DC – Today U.S. Representative John Hall (D-NY19) secured authorization for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to study Dutchess County Watersheds.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is already authorized to study the need for flood mitigation measures at the Ten Mile River. The study resolution that Hall requested would authorize the Army Corps to undertake a review of the remaining Dutchess watersheds to determine if any additional flood or damage reduction is advisable to mitigate future storm impacts.

"Several major floods have occurred in Dutchess County over the past decade," said Hall. "If we don't take preventative action now, there will only be more flooding in the future that could endanger people's lives and inflict more property damage."

This study is a necessary first step for any potential Army Corps projects to prevent flooding in the area. The Dutchess County Watershed Study Resolution passed the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee today by voice vote. The Resolution does not require approval by the full House for authorization.

Hall also took action this week to give local governments the resources they need to protect communities in the Hudson Valley and across the country from flooding due to dams. The House passed H.R. 3224, the Dam Rehabilitation and Repair Act, which Hall is a co-sponsor of, on Monday by 263-102.

"We need to give the dams in the Hudson Valley the attention they deserve before a major disaster occurs," said Hall. "A dam failure could be a tragedy here, resulting in deaths, environmental damage and economic catastrophe."

Hall helped the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, on which he serves, mark up and pass the Dam Rehabilitation and Repair Act earlier this summer.

This bill would require the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide grants to states for the rehabilitation and repair of publicly-owned dams that fail to meet minimum safety standards.

On May 7th, Hall and U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer visited Salisbury Mills and Whaley Lake Dam to focus attention on the problem of deteriorating dams and the urgent need for Congressional action.

Sixteen dams in Dutchess County, including Whaley Lake Dam, and 22 dams in Orange County have been classified as "high-hazard," meaning their failure could result in loss of life or severe property damage.

"These high hazard dams are near people and could potentially endanger lives," said Hall.

"These dangerous dams can benefit from funding this bill authorizes for repairs that are sorely needed before a catastrophic dam failure occurs."

Whaley Lake Dam has a history of serious structural and repair flaws. The dam is over 150 years old and has fallen into serious disrepair. For years remedies were sought for the dam but major improvements were never completed. The dam holds back more than 1.2 billion gallons of water, and the lake is crucial to the quality of life for the neighborhood of homes that surround it.

Some of the problems at Whaley Lake dam include a release valve that is no longer operational and cannot operate properly in the event of a flood. The spillway is not up to current standards and the crank is in the center of the dam which makes it virtually inaccessible. Boils have also emerged on the dam which suggests there is seeping in the dam.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation finally investigated and determined that either repair would have to be made to the dam or the DEC would have to breach it. Such a breach would devastate the entire Whaley Lake Community.

Despite efforts of local leaders, the dam has yet to be repaired and has structural deficiencies that have to be addressed or it will be taken down. The dam has a downstream hazard potential of "high" meaning if a malfunction were to occur, there would most likely be loss of human life as well as economic and environmental damage.